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MUSIC AND HISTORY

BY

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LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

This palatial music building is extraordinary even among the many sumptuous edifices possessed by some of our great music schools and conservatories. But what distinguishes it more than the eminently thoughtful and practical arrangement of its space is the instruction imparted within its walls. For this is a department in a liberal arts college and not a school or conservatory of music. Needless to say, I do not wish to imply that an academic department of music is, by its very nature, superior to a school of music; it stands to reason that art comes first and its study and criticism follow. What I mean is that in this country — as in England, whence our collegiate system comes — we tend to confuse the functions of the two institutions, with the result that music in the college, which is an institution of higher education (and perhaps even of learning), is often not taught as one of the liberal arts but as a skill, only tenuously related to the other subjects of instruction and intellectual endeavor.

This college can take pride in the fact that it is not so at Vassar, for its music department puts to shame the undergraduate division of many a great university. One man is responsible for this enlightened attitude. He not only virtually designed this building, but planned the curriculum, organized the fine library, and himself took charge of the historical courses that became models of their kind. I am happy to pay tribute to George Dickinson in his own home. Everyone knows about his achievements at Vassar, but he has done much more: he has vitally influenced the cause of musical education and scholarship all over the land. Now, as I turn to the business in hand, I do so with the feeling that lectures of this sort would not be delivered in our colleges were it not for his long and patient work and determination to make music instruction in the college worthy of the sister disciplines.

* * *

IT is entirely owing to our ways of learning and teaching music that there are relatively few who clearly perceive what music means within the history of civilization, and thus what it means to the nation and its culture. In this billowing fog in which all contours of thought are lost, the figures of the past other than the principal heroes of recent times sink to the status of mere means by which the so-called music historian satisfies his desire for a play with esthetics, forms, and techniques. We might call this sort of art history — to use a terminology much in vogue these days — a mere historical eroticism, for it eschews the essence of the scholarly procedure: objectivity and rigorous regard for the truth. Historiography, even in the arts, cannot be legitimized on grounds of beauty alone.

The most common approach to musical history is, of course, the time-honored biographical or “personal history” method. We might call this the method of idealization by isolation. But the detached single individual, even if he becomes a typical representative of a historical epoch, cannot always be grasped as such; in fact, in many instances he appears as a strange, not readily understandable phenomenon that refuses to be reconciled with the milieu. Perhaps the best known — and least understood — of these strange phenomena is Bach, who simply evades all attempts at classification, even though he is considered the embodiment of the High Baroque.

Even when we deal with musical history on a plane considerably higher than hero worship, what we examine and teach is not the history of music as an integral part of the history of ideas, but the history of a craft or *métier*. Now while the craft of music is of the utmost importance, it should not occupy the forefront in musical historiography. Every one of us has had the experience of listening to a fine musician performing with a flawless technique, yet the music rising from the strings or from the throat was dead, because the mere technician was confused by precisely that which is served by his technique. This

concept that equates the evolution of the *métier* with history has led to a most regrettable attitude in viewing musical history, one which has actually tended to ruin our appreciation of music, of a legion of fine composers, and of a library full of great music.

I am referring to the prevalence of the honored institution of "forerunner." A few examples will help. When listening to Weber's *Euryanthe*, one of his forgotten works precisely on account of its experimental and forward-looking nature, the listener cannot suppress his suspicion of plagiarism — from *Lohengrin*. This may seem a chronological paradox, which turns the real facts upside down, yet given our conditioning the earlier work becomes mediatized; it tends to lose rather than gain in standing. According to this conception new, shall we say, "inventions" in music lose all their interest, and their original freshness cannot be recaptured and enjoyed. The idea is of no importance since a later composer embodied it in a seemingly fuller measure. However, if the innovation is of a technical nature, the first employment of an instrument or of a chord, the record stands to the credit of the bold craftsman. It is of no use pointing out that the direct forerunner principle seldom works out satisfactorily, even if we tacitly accept this method which demotes great composers to the status of mere yeomen. Take the senior Bach, to choose this paragon of musical virtue acceptable to all factions. He certainly depended on older music, not, however, for technical features of the *métier* but for sheer musical thought. As he grew older he quite obviously turned away from the musical current of his time, from the suave and sensuous style of the Neapolitans, to commune with the earlier composers, not the often-cited forerunners, but the forerunners of the forerunners, the long-buried Netherlanders and old Italians. Another such was Brahms, who consciously shunned the world of his contemporaries, Wagner and Liszt, to return to his distant north German ancestors and to the glories of the Classic era.

Thus it comes about that veritable monstrosities of historical judgment are calmly dished out to the student of music and

no one loses a heartbeat over them, whereas similar ineptitudes in the field of fine arts or literature would make life unattractive to their perpetrators. Let me quote a typical instance of this queer philosophy of history. There is scarcely a book on the appreciation of music that does not qualify the first two symphonies of Beethoven as being still "just like Haydn or Mozart." This, we must bear in mind, is a judgment of value which, of course, immediately trims the two great Classic composers of whatever merit they may have had in the previous chapter of the book, before they became forerunners. It is clear that this shallow sort of historical procedure which searches for similarities upon which to establish the continuity of evolution, only to dismiss the originator in favor of the exploiter, is not worthy of serious consideration. It rejects what was living in each period, of which the people of that period partook. It is no wonder then that until recent times (and in most academic institutions to this very day) the men of classical antiquity, the Middle Ages, and even the 16th and 17th centuries, appear as deaf and dumb; and it was only in the days of Watteau and Hogarth and Tiepolo, that is, at the time when the sister art of painting was rather well established, that an obscure Protestant cantor emerges from the centuries of preparation to establish music as an art worthy of the other muses.

An equally unsound approach professes to derive all facets of music from purely sociological circumstances. Again, the sociological is a most important factor in historiography, but its application to the history of art must be carefully balanced by other elements. There can be no question that society, the Church, musical establishments at the courts, or the middle class musical associations, cannot be separated from the music written for and practised by these institutions; still, it is not possible to distinguish what is essentially Haydnesque in Haydn from his role as a servant in the Esterházy household.

Surely it is not enough to know more or less about the historical data to understand a historical phenomenon, for what this phenomenon signifies can be learned not so much from

the phenomenon itself as from a general historical contemplation which poses the question whether there is a meaning behind that historical event and what this meaning is. In order to arrive at this understanding we must temporarily abandon the facts and avoid concentration on the objects nearest to the eye and must widen our glance to a view. In fact, we must remove ourselves from our subject to such an extent that we shall ask ourselves, what altogether does the history of music mean in human history? We may then discover that in the shuffle of details we have forgotten that the central theme of musical history is man. We are accustomed to see in literature or painting man as the centre of art, but we fail to realize that music is not only the expression of man — but that it is a representation of man too. It offers a picture of man under the point of view of the always prevailing human ideal. Now what is this human ideal?

The dictionary explains the term “humanity” as “man’s consciousness of himself as human in kind and as distinguished from the external and the superhuman world.” The lexicographer gives the Latin *humanitas* as the term from which the English word descended but fails to convey the full, or rather extended, meaning of *humanitas*; for the latter does not only signify the existence of such consciousness, it also embraces the will and desire for it, which gives the notion of humanity a much wider meaning. The historian knows that this desire for human consciousness is the more telling of the constituent parts of humanity. It certainly gave art its most important impetus. However, neither the existence of, nor the will for, human consciousness discloses a palpable content until the stream of history flows through it and endows it with life and color. And now we can say that the history of music, and of course of art in general, is in its most profound sense the expression of the metamorphoses of humanity and of its ideals.

The notion of humanity originated in antiquity. Not in Greece, as one would think, but in Rome — more precisely, in the Rome of Cicero who must be considered its creator. It did not originate in ancient Greece because the Greeks lived

the life of the Greek man, whereas the Ciceronian Romans, who ruefully felt themselves inferior to that life, considered the Grecian as the human ideal and made a cult of it. Thus humanity was the ideal of that cultivated world the less cultivated Romans saw in Hellas. Cicero systematized this ideal and analyzed it in detail. In so doing he gave an answer to the Roman who aspired to rise to higher spheres, to become a man in the noblest sense of the word. Cicero's philosophy goes much beyond the immediate aims of the Roman world, for it implies what man should be in order to fulfill the high idea of man.

We now should place the music of antiquity in this climate and see what happens, but we shall reserve this demonstration for the next era. We are so remote from the music of antiquity about which very little is known, that only a handful of specialized scholars would know what to do with it — and I am not among this élite.

There are two characteristics which give the Christian ideal of humanity its particular content and cause it to differ diametrically from that of classical antiquity: a metaphysical basic tenet and the ascetic attitude, the fleeing from the world that naturally grew out from the first. The tremendous new idea with which Christianity eventually vanquished spiritually Greco-Roman antiquity is this: the meaning of life was shifted from the present to a metaphysical beyond. According to this new doctrine, which would have been incomprehensible to the man of antiquity, the purpose of all life on earth is to overcome this very life. As the radiant world of Hellas gave way to the somber world of Christianity, two indivisible doctrines came to the fore that gave to the *humanitas* of antiquity its *coup de grâce*: the tendency of fallen nature to evil, and the complementary necessity of seeking salvation through supernatural forces. Theologically speaking, this is the notion of original sin and of grace. It stands to reason that this new humanity was strange not only to the man of dying antiquity but also to the unenlightened and unlettered Barbarian of the West. The Middle Ages cannot be appreciated unless we understand that

it exemplifies and represents the struggle of the former Barbarians against a conception of life that was fundamentally alien to them. It was a struggle, but one that took the noblest and most profound form that a spiritual contest can assume — conquest from within. The West did not deny Christianity, rather it creatively experienced it, ultimately the Germanic lands finding their own version of it in the Reformed faiths.

The music of these Middle Ages has interested the historian, and reams have been written about it. A very distinguished American monograph on the subject is evidence that we too have contributed our share to its exploration. Yet earlier medieval music, especially that of the Gothic era, seldom leaves the scholar's bookshelves, and is not heard except in classrooms where it is a duty to know it. We should admit that there is a seemingly unbridgeable gulf between this music and ourselves, and although we can decipher it and even explain its compositional features, we are unable to abandon ourselves to its charms, for we cannot discern them. Yet another century, and as soon as the first rays of the Renaissance touch this art of the West, we have little trouble in *experiencing* the music of the time. What can it be that makes this music so forbidding? All contemporary documents speak of the esteem and admiration tendered to the master musicians of the Gothic; what did their own age see and hear in them that we cannot conjure up? Let us be faithful to the premises we started from and forget for the moment the great organa and motets of the Gothic and look at the circumstances under which they were composed.

When probing into the music of the Middle Ages the first thing that strikes the student is the absence of folk and popular music. Until about 1300 such music is not even mentioned in any known document and we must advance well into the 14th century before we encounter more than traces of it. Curiously enough, the appearance of this folk art coincides with the rise of secular art music. Thus, on the one hand we have an elaborate literature of sacred music, the work of learned masters most of whom were clerics, on the other, the virtual absence of any other kind. It surely is not possible that the naive natural-

ism of the people which is the root of all artistic culture did not find an expression in the Middle Ages, for since the dawn of history such folk art, whether music or painting, has always been present. Folk song is, to quote the poet, the interpretation of our happiness and sorrow, the confession of individual existence. Here is where our musical territory par excellence begins. The point of view of the people is naturalistic-mythical, and its art can rise only to the point where nature and human imagination are still in rapport. This naturalism the people defended with tooth and nail against all outside influence. The European peoples submitted to Christian theology, but beneath its veneer they clung to their naturalism, thus creating that twin outlook always characteristic of their practical thought, and it was this that created the dialectic development of the West which rests on the constant struggle of the two poles. The naturalistic instincts of the pre-Christian West were instantly aroused when it made contact with Mediterranean metaphysics. Likewise, their naive conception of space and time, probably not clearly formulated, became articulate as soon as they were offered the eternity of time and the spaceless heaven. Much that in the first centuries had been proscribed by the Church now began to flourish following the absorption of the Barbarians. That secular music did flourish even though every trace of it has been erased, is clear from the many ecclesiastic censures against musicians other than the *magistri* of the church choir. This music had to be suppressed and proscribed because it ran completely counter to the dictates of the Church.

According to that aspect of Christian theology based on chiliasm, the millennium of the theocratic kingdom, there is neither space nor time, for the reality of the world is God, who is a unity without time or space. Obviously there can be no ideological compromise between the theological and the popular conception, but an empirical compromise was of course necessary and feasible. This was much more readily achieved in architecture than in music. It is characteristic of Gothic architecture that its formal principle does not follow natural

and even division of weight, that, instead of a practical and logical arrangement like that of the Renaissance, it strove for the fantastic and the supernatural. Its whole vertical, heaven-bound direction is opposed to the law of gravity, and the equilibrium of Gothic structures would be threatened were it not secured by buttresses and other elaborate auxiliaries. But these buttresses are on the *outside* and their function is hidden; they take no apparent part in the formation of the inner space or the frontal, principal picture. This is in harmony with the view expressed early in the Middle Ages that earthly stability is a necessary evil. So much for space.

The same is true, and now we come closer to music, of the conception of time, or rather timelessness. The old painters whom we so condescendingly call "the primitives" had a very definite view in this regard. They followed the realistic popular concept of successive action, yet were trying to condense it into simultaneity. All this is relatively easy to explain, for the plastic arts, dependent on seeing, reach the external, and the external world is general. Even subjectivity is realized in collective signs, whereas in music even collectivism gains expression through subjectivity. Or more specifically, in the fine arts even the most individual is conveyed through the general, whereas in music even the most universal appears through the individual. Therefore medieval art, embracing architecture, sculpture, and painting, may be somewhat strange to us but, unlike music, it never is forbidding, even to the layman.

The musical counterpart of this Gothic art is indeed frightening to behold. Let us take the principal and highest art form, the motet. At the outset we must realize that according to every utterance from those times, whether by a theoretical writer or by a philosopher, the spatial conception of the fine arts weighs heavily on the subjectivistic nature of the lyric arts, causing the temporal quality of medieval polyphony to be a prisoner of a collective-universal spatial philosophy. The spirit of the motet makes the musical form timeless by mixing melodies of opposing nature and character in a manner that prevents their melting together; they remain separate entities.

The sounding together of these several tunes does not result in a true polyphony, it is only an enhanced sort of heterophony. The listener can direct his full attention to only one part at a time, because the other melodies do not attach themselves to the first one; they merely coincide with one another in a sort of deliberate accident. The more we try to take in the motet as a whole, the more the melodies disturb one another; thus we either jump from place to place or follow one melody and let the others remain in the background. The whole of the form — and an infinitely chiselled and incredibly complicated form it is — is nevertheless nothing but a document, the document of the superhuman force of the verb. This conclusion is inevitable if we take the motet in all its seriousness as it should be taken. The often expressed opinion that music was still in its experimental stage, that the motet, and medieval music in general, constitute a mere groping for elementary effects, is only a sign of ignorance of historical developments. If this type of construction is not the result of the most serious philosophical and theological conceptions it can only be humorous, like the many amusing pieces composed in later centuries under the name of *quodlibet*. However, it is hard to believe that the earnest and most learned masters of the Gothic wanted to play a game of hide and seek with their musical melodies. And now we can learn our lesson from history. That the forcing of a spatial conception on a temporal art can have such adverse effect is well illustrated in an analogous case, the crisis of music in the impressionist movement. At that point music had already passed its optimum, for the chance which the plastic arts gain in grasping the moment to render it in all its fleeting intensity is already a loss for music. For even though momentaneity is perhaps the most subjective manner of conception, it again excludes continuity, forcing music into spatial connections. Color, an eminently spatial element, becomes the dominant factor.

We can now contrast the spirit of medieval church music with the contemporary folk art. The insurmountable wall between them is not formed by their opposing qualities, by a

metaphysical-religious and a naturalistic-secular tendency; church music always had in it secular-popular elements. The unbridgeable gap is created by the philosophical orientation which underlies Christian liturgic music, an orientation which turns against nature, whereas the fount of folk music is naturalism. The collectivism of ecclesiastical metaphysics oppresses the subjective, relegating it into the background; whereas folk music, even when nourished by metaphysical elements, seeks to reconcile the subjective with the universal. Church thought clings to the principle of timelessness, and makes concessions to time to the minimal extent required by practical necessities; whereas the secular spirit of folk music regards time as the purest reality, hence the polar antithesis of the two which is apparent in every formal manifestation of their respective music.

But there are still other capital differences between the two. Liturgic music of the Middle Ages is almost always declamatory, i.e., it favors the text, while folk music is mostly purely "musical," endeavoring to render the poetic form through musical form. The text of ecclesiastic music is mainly in prose, whereas folk music is always in verse. In ecclesiastic music rhythmic structure and text are related only by the sense of the words, while in folk music the mood of the poem is so fully absorbed by the music that rhythm rules even over the details of the poem. Medieval church music is denaturalized and therefore its spirit is, strictly speaking, amusical; whereas folk music is music of the flesh, its texts are mostly amorous, its teacher is nature, it rises from bodily motions, and from sensual impulses. In ecclesiastic recitation the cadence is a logical close as represented in the *finalis*. There is no rhythmic ratio between *repercussio* and *finalis*, only a logical relationship. In folk music, leaning from the earliest date towards the major-minor system, the ratio of functional relationship between tonic, dominant and subdominant is an autonomous musical phenomenon and is largely independent of the text.

Gothic music is, then, intellectual in its formal manifestations, while folk music is purely esthetic. In the final analysis,

it was the will for timelessness that created medieval ecclesiastic polyphony. There can be no question that a popular polyphony existed centuries before the ecclesiastic variety, nor can there be any question that it was from this foundation that the ecclesiastic variety grew. But since the most primitive functional harmony uses cadences for delineation of formal proportions, such naturalistic-primitive and subjective music had to be opposed by the Church; it was therefore against the secularism of popular metrics that the *magistri* opposed their philosophical convictions. Far from strengthening functional logic, far from promoting even time proportions or the clear rhythmic accentuation of drums and cymbals, they wanted to efface everything that would detract from the contourless mystery of religion.

The reverence we accord to the *ars antiqua* is, of course, fully justified. Nevertheless, we shall never be able to resuscitate this music, we shall never be able to get it beyond the musicological lecture room or the university chapel, for in this music the esthetic formulation of the *materia musica* is not realized in time relations — the only kind we are able to experience — but one-sidedly in tone relations. The tone material itself is of secondary importance just as the man whose soul it represents is of secondary importance. The artistic form itself represents a value only insofar as it is liturgic, because, according to St. Augustine, while all art originates from humanity, man is not able to represent the divine perfectly. The master of the *ars antiqua* was more a theologian-philosopher than a musician, and music, unlike architecture but very much like philosophy, is merely *ancilla theologiae*, the symbol of timelessness. Nevertheless, the esthetic pleasure the medieval artist derived from the arrangement, symmetry, and logic of abstract proportions was a very real one.

As you can readily see, the *métier* which we so diligently explore is dwarfed by the tremendous issues raised by life and human ideals. Restricting ourselves to the technical aspects we may miss the meaning of it altogether. Some might say: "Well, in the Middle Ages this may hold true, but as soon as we can

exercise our native musical instinct we are on firm ground.” All right, let us advance then on to this *terra firma*.

When the Renaissance produced the great movement known as humanism the Ciceronian ideal of humanity was reborn. And yet, aside from superficial resemblances, the humanity of Cicero's time and that of the Renaissance are, viewed both historically and psychologically, two very different phenomena. The symbol reappeared, but could not be the same for, since Cicero, the world had greatly changed. The reborn symbol had to face the Christian ideal before it could assert itself. The great reckoning took place and the new ideal of humanity, while not denying the next world as a theological doctrine, yet in practice put emphasis upon this life on earth. This new *humanitas* could not believe that the purpose of life should be its own denial; on the contrary, it stood for the cultivation of ever higher forms of life. The new humanity is, then, a conscious or unconscious protest against the Christian ideal of man the powerless; it again enthrones man as the measure of all things, and man becomes the meaning of history. Humanism is the conception of life from the point of view of man.

Music faithfully reflects the great upheaval that is implicit in the rise of this new aspect of life. The small garden of secular music grows into a vast nursery of flowers. Frottola, villanella, madrigal, chanson occupy the composers, and the output spills over the old boundaries to inundate the entire domain of music.

With the easing of the theological pressure, as scholasticism was displaced, a pantheistic conception of nature creeps into the world of the Renaissance. Painter and sculptor embrace realism and the architect emphasizes naturalness in static arrangements. With the use of perspective the visual arts reach a milestone of demarcation, yet they still conceive of space as non-existent. Of course, in the representation of miracles, naturalistic space is by the nature of the subject negated, but more revealing is the fact that such pictures do seek to convey the impression of abstract or ideal space, — the artificial space

of the studio, or the unreal and seemingly weightless expanse of the cupola.

This situation is paralleled in music. We have spoken of the two poles that are in constant opposition: theological philosophy and naturalism. In music, the lower pole encompasses folk song and folk dance, from which grew the general type of western song and dance. This folk music is, of course, the result of a popular, naive-naturalistic conception of time and likes to build on a pulsating group-rhythm. Being the product of an essentially subjective conception, it can and does lead to the richest and most characteristic territories of music. But it could not achieve these higher art forms by its own resources because popular art follows nature in seeking everywhere the simplest basic patterns which it defends stubbornly against encroachment. It is for this reason that this art never proceeds on its own beyond an elementary dynamism, that the higher dynamism which reflects the struggle of universal forces is missing in the art forms of the people. The monochrome of its world outlook restricts folk art to the narrow region of artistic forms which is characterized by an even distribution of the collective and subjective elements on the plane of the naive-universal.

But the immense attraction exerted by this music on the learned composer of the rising Renaissance was the functional tonality embodied in folksong, especially since this functional tonality was not restricted to the major-minor modes but was tied to the subjectivity and to the naturalistic sense of time which accompanies the former. Thus, such functional relationship can exist even within the ecclesiastic modes if the cadencing is not dependent on a rhetorical order but is autonomously musical. The fundamental difference between church and folk music is therefore not to be sought in the scales upon which they are built but on the application of the time element. The same scale can have two meanings. If it follows the logic and sense of the prose text it will be governed by its *finalis*; if it organizes autonomously musical proportions it becomes functional. In one case the cadence represents the

end of sections in asymmetric proportions, in the other it signifies the end of relatively evenly proportioned segments and conveys a definitely functional feeling. Thus, contrary to a widespread belief, functional architecture is not the sole property of the major-minor system, but a general characteristic of autonomous musical thought.

The procedure whereby these life-giving elements of folk music gained first slow and then rapid acceptance in art music is quite similar to the just mentioned procedures in architecture. Popular polyphony, from which grew our western art music, was originally essentially variation. Bourdon and round, in which the melody, so to speak, plays with itself, intensify themselves by strengthening, widening, constricting, or projecting the line. But it is lacking in such spiritual traits as would deepen its significance. We might say that popular polyphony is the result of an effort to amplify an already existing form in all its details. Popular polyphony therefore is really a mere variant of the monophonic presented simultaneously. This polyphony is a playful, hedonistic enjoyment of sound patterns. Against this stands ecclesiastic art music with anything but playful intentions; for while popular polyphony represents the intensification of such independent-musical forms as need no intensification, to which polyphony brings not an essential but only a quantitative addition, ecclesiastic polyphony implies a multiplicity of moods, a metaphysical deepening. Therefore this music, which interprets a sacred text, will always have a mystical background in which hides a residue that cannot be brought to the surface.

It was in this ecclesiastic polyphony, as suffused by the elements of popular-secular music, that the most characteristic trait of occidental music was born: the searching, penetrating, probing quality we feel so intensely in more recent music, but which was nonetheless present in earlier music. But let us make no mistake about one thing: this music of the Renaissance, which unlike the music of the Gothic is accessible to us, is no longer the work of the composer schooled in Augustinian thought, to whom time and space did not exist. While still

clinging to a good many of the old tenets, he now composes music that can stand on its own as music. In the measure that popular music made itself felt in the course of the historical development of contrapuntal forms, the rhythmic and tonal construction demands a voice in musical architecture. And the optimum is reached when popular elements, notably the dance forms, are completely assimilated and stylized, while at the same time the tendency of polyphony to profundity is retained but is dependent on a musical logic.

This music, from Dufay to Josquin, is fairly well known, but curiously enough it is again the *métier* that is extolled, the unquestionably fantastic contrapuntal ability of these composers, while the idea, as usual, is ignored. And yet what important (and at times embarrassing) conclusions can be gained by studying history as a development of ideas and not techniques! First of all, ever since Dufay, musicians have declared, first timidly, then emphatically, the oneness of music, that is, that there is no essential difference between sacred and secular music: everything depends in art on the purpose and mode of expression. This is the great contribution of the Renaissance *humanitas* in the field of music. That subsequently, as in the wake of the Reformation, or during the Palestrina revival, the essential oneness of music was again questioned, even hotly denied, should not mislead us; any intelligent study of the history of church music shows that the stream of music could never again be deflected by extramusical powers; the old fundamental division between sacred and secular music, *qua music*, is gone forever.

Noble attempts have been made to return to the old medieval concept. The master of the Sainte Chapelle, the earnest Flemish composer Ockeghem, tried to return to the contourless mystery of the Gothic and his appearance must be considered a sort of neo-Gothic revival. At his death the French poets bewailed his passing in words accorded to princes, and indeed Ockeghem was called *princeps musicae*; his thirty-six part motet is mentioned as one of the world's wonders, and his contrapuntal technique, canonic and imitative writing, were

held unsurpassable. But this coldly glowing genius eagerly summoned his immense musical wizardry in order to cool his fever, to erect barriers for his passions. For this man is the last of the possessed in whom the eternal soaring, the mystery, the endless melody and endless counterpoint, the heaven-reaching architecture of the musical cathedrals of the Gothic once more raise their voice against the new humanity of the Renaissance. This art could not be continued by anyone else, and those who attempted it produced nothing but mannerism.

It was no longer possible to compose music for the church that would be *fundamentally* different from secular music. It is true that Mass and motet took their departure from premises that were different from those of madrigal and chanson; but the chanson melodies intruded into the Mass and motet, and now the chanson tune came to have equal rights with the Gregorian chant as the material upon which a sacred work can be built. Some of the most exalted sacred liturgic works were composed upon popular Franco-Flemish dance tunes, amorous songs, or bantering ditties. The listeners, unlike their 19th century brethren who thought such a procedure almost sacrilegious, were not scandalized, because they were children of the new humanity, to whom a good melody was a noble melody, perfectly proper under any auspices. Much has been made of the presence of these chanson tunes in liturgical music, but all the conjectures and censures advanced in historically uninformed books are false. What mattered was the good tune, which remained good in or out of church, and the original connotations were simply forgotten when *La belle se sied* was turned into *Deus pater omnipotens*. In its turn, the chanson showed influences emanating from motet and Mass, for together with the happy melodic sallies there are tears and sighs scarcely hidden behind the courtly exterior, or as the chanson itself says: *Triste plaisir et douloureuse joie*. How unjustly the world has judged this great music and these great musicians, every inch the equal of their much more famous confrères in the other arts. It has granted them respect but mainly on account of their redoubtable craft of composition. Well, their

compositional style eventually became antiquated, but not their melodies, those wonderful, everlasting melodies that have lived on for centuries. But it is no longer permissible to praise a church musician for his melodies; he should not choose melodies for their sheer beauty, and he should not be too happy about them either. Ever since the 19th century Romantic movement and the essentially super-Romantic Palestrina revival, church music stands for unmitigated gloom, relieved only by a plentiful and sanctimonious use of dominant seventh chords.

Let us examine one more metamorphosis of *humanitas*, one much closer to us in time. I am referring to the so-called Classic era, the last third of the 18th century, and extending through the first quarter of the 19th. The word has become ambiguous in these days, when the record manufacturers advertise not only the "Classics" but also the "Semi-Classics," a definition that would stump a bevy of philologists. However, the philologists do not have to worry because our authors and critics simplify their task considerably. These worthies equate Classicism with formalism, and every one of you must have come across the statement that for the Classic composer form was the primary concern; content was secondary if not negligible. According to this opinion, amiable and rather playful composers such as Haydn and Mozart, compass and ruler in hand, created nicely designed formal schemes which they then proceeded to fill in with some pretty music. This idyllic and a bit irresponsible music-making came to an end only with the advent of Beethoven, who, to quote the title of an incredible book that not so long ago had great currency, was "the man who freed music." What did he free it from? The pseudo-historians are ready with the answer: from the fetters of objectivity. This may sound humorous to those who know the music of the Classic era, but unfortunately it was meant in earnest and still enjoys great authority. For did not Lawrence Gilman, one of our famous and influential critics, call all classical symphonies as similar to one another as the buns baked in the 18th century baker's oven? What is this formalism, this

objectivity that allegedly circumscribes the work of the Classic composer, apparently preventing him from projecting his true feelings in his music?

First of all, we must remember that what we call the Classic era was preceded by a period that goes under the name of *Sturm und Drang*, Storm and Stress. The poets and composers of the Storm and Stress represent a human type that has been known for a long time yet always appears as new. They are the dissatisfied and the rebellious, the iconoclasts and the destroyers of form, the ones who always start and seldom finish things. They live dangerously and dynamically, they are forever excited and addicted to excesses; they want to widen the world, and in so doing form and measure drop from their hands. In a word, they are the revolutionaries who time and again return in western art, who are both its embers and its bellows. They are the eternal Romanticists. Their role is the same whether in the north or in the south: they rip apart and unravel the fabric of music in order to liberate the magic hidden in the threads. There is a direct line leading from these 18th century Romanticists to their more grandiose and durable brethren of the 19th century; but before Romanticism became the artistic faith of an entire century it paused for an entre'acte which we call the Classic era. Indeed, we must begin to realize that in the few decades of the Classic era we are not dealing with a style period that follows and is followed in an orderly fashion by others, but, as I have just said, with an interlude, around which the previous stylistic current merely parts as around an island, only to reunite at the other end. That the epoch-making synthesis that is 18th century Classicism blinds us to the current that flows around it is perhaps understandable, though not pardonable. As a teacher of a good many years' experience I defy any student to name the names of the Romantic composers, many of them well worth knowing, who refused to go along with the sonata ideal which was the quintessence of Classic musical thought, who in fact, rebelled against it. And yet they were there, before Schubert and Weber, even before Beethoven reached his peak.

Viewed from this perspective we will understand that from the subjectivism of the *Sturm und Drang* there arose a new phase of humanity which, judged by its tendency, could be called nothing else but objective. But this new objectivity did not aim at displacing the subjectivity of the Storm and Stress movement, only at taming its amorphous excesses. And the remarkable fact is that this sobering up of the movement or, if you please, this new objectivity, did not come from without, but began in the souls of the very men who once were buffeted by the tempest. They changed because they discovered that their boundless subjectivism did not lead to a heightening of life, rather to a debasement of it, which found its poetic symbol in the suicide of Werther.

The music of Vienna did, once more, gather and elevate, achieve the miracle of synthesis, and this after Baroque weight, Rococo lightness, and pre-Romantic excitement. Once more every extreme is reconciled in the noblest equilibrium, to become the ultimate harmony of Europe's music, its topless tower, and its third and perhaps final crowning; a harvest that can come only after the most bountiful summer. This Classic synthesis offers a new, intimate yet spacious, peaceful and warming home to humanity, a home whither it can always return and where it always will be on well-loved ground. This home and this security appear as a new idea and a new discovery after the rootless wanderings of early Romanticism. The world has found out that sunshine is preferable to eerie moonlight pierced by lightning, that the sky is more beautiful than the clouds, and sobriety better than eternal intoxication. But above all, it found out that only arrival gives sense to travel. The aged Haydn proudly declared that his London symphonies are understood by the whole world. Indeed, by the end of the century we no longer speak of German music, for this music became the musical language of the world, as in the two previous supreme syntheses the musical language of the Franco-Flemish composers and later of the Neapolitans became the language of the world. For in these symphonies of Haydn, as in the works of Mozart and of the other masters

of the era, there speaks a musicianship that is universal, timeless, and valid under all circumstances. This music is not one solution or one aspect, nor is it a personal matter; it speaks to all peoples.

But Classicism does not stand for Olympian calm, cold reserve, haughty isolation from all that is disturbing or dissonant. On the contrary, the mature Classic style shows interest in every tributary stream because its principal aim, and its very nature, is to contain the whole in every detail.

And now, returning to the lamented formalism of the Classic era, I should like to use a comparison from architecture, always felicitously related to music. The post-Baroque composers, the stragglers, the fugue-writers, who were clinging to contrapuntal structures when the world around them was more interested in decoration than in architecture, had lost the feeling for the life-giving substance that animated the true Baroque. What remained from the Baroque were the bare walls which stood there somberly, even menacingly, defying the new spirit that was pouring in from the south. The musical architects of that post-Baroque era were at heart fortress engineers and not church and palace builders, and they constructed bastions instead of colonnades. The Austrians, hemmed in by their northern and southern neighbors, Germans and Italians, were destined to reconcile the two musical cultures and in so doing to create a synthesis that was to conquer the world of music. They drove the hollow gloom from their edifices and they tore down the bastions, and in their stead built graceful spires. But let us make no mistake: the silly comparisons with Watteau and the *fêtes galantes* can only be ascribed to ignorance of history as well as music. For while the bastions were torn down, the massive foundations were kept, and the spires, although graceful and airy, had their own strength and majesty. This was still constructive architecture and not interior decoration.

The modern listener, used to the opulence of the Wagner-Strauss-Sibelius orchestral world, may be a bit disappointed when he enters the world of the Classic sonata which includes everything from string quartet to Mass. He will find the in-

terior of these works on a smaller scale, and will look around somewhat embarrassed. He will find things apparently so well organized that every little stone has its formal and ordained spot that denies the flight of fancy. This disappointment accompanies every centrally constructed edifice, especially if the portals through which the beholder enters do not prepare and inform him about the underlying plan. What is the portal, the principal opening subject of a Classical symphony? Compared to the ample melody of a late Romantic symphony it is indeed frugal and lapidary; but unlike the Romantic symphony, which exists right from the beginning and then endeavors to maintain this existence, the Classical symphony grows, grows like a centrally planned structure. And the more harmonious the interior of a building the smaller the immediate dynamic effect it creates. No one would guess the actual vastness of St. Peter's in Rome unless he paces the nave. Only when we become oriented, when our eyes — or in this instance our ears — get used to the proportions, when we begin to measure without pacing, will the phenomenon grow and become understandable.

* * *

I have endeavored to single out three periods from the more than two thousand years of recorded musical history to demonstrate that philosophical ideas, changing as the style periods themselves do, always profoundly influence the very concept of music. Penetration into the inner dynamics, tension, and rhythm of events — that is, into history — into the interplay of being and value, is the first requisite of the study of the growth of an art. This leads to more than an understanding of the past and the present; it also offers an anticipatory interpretation of the future.

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